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Working Group I
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CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTS:

OPTIONS FOR AGENDA 21

Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development the Secretariat of the Conference was requested to re-examine its work on document A/CONF.151/PC/27 on Conservation and Development of Forests, in line with decision 1/14 of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, taking into consideration the various submissions made during the meetings of Working Group I and the Ad hoc Subgroup on Forests, and as fully and as comprehensively as possible to analyse and address the issue of forests.

2. It further requested the Secretariat to take due account in its work in this area of the relevant paragraphs of the Bergen Declaration, the Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development, and the Final Declaration adopted by

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the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific, as well as the results of the regional Conference for Africa, organized in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/228, section II, paragraph 13 and decision I of the Preparatory Committee at its organizational session.

3. While addressing the issue of Agenda 21 it will be necessary to take into consideration some of the specific characteristics of forests as for example the much longer planning periods and the trees growing time, which are inherent to forest management, together with the enormous diversity found in the several forest types and geographical environments. Attention should be also given to the different cultural and economic situations of the countries involved and the benefits populations obtain from their forest resources.

4. For the preparation of this document, the UNCED Secretariat has received the support of the members of its Working Party on Forests and from several intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations such as FAO, ITTO, IUCN, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNESCO, the WB, and WRI, as well as from several independent experts.

5. As explained in the background paper (Document A/CONF.151/PC/64), the main issues related to conservation and development of forests are linked to each other, other issues and other sectors, particularly in respect of agriculture, climate change and biodiversity. Background papers on these particular sectors are also presented to this Preparatory Meeting. 1/ Furthermore, the forest related activities are closely linked with the social and economic situation of countries, with policy decisions affecting, for example, land use, trade and energy consumption. The state of forest and vegetation cover in highlands will influence soil conservation and water cycles. An adequate provision of forest products is necessary to enhance the living conditions of people. The following options developed through the Working Party on Forest should be regarded as preliminary and indicative in nature. The action proposals referred to will need to be further refined and elaborated in light of the discussion by the Preparatory Committee of the principles for a consensus on forests presented in Document A/CONF.151/PC/65.

1/ A/CONF.151/PC/61.
A/CONF.151/PC/57.
A/CONF.151/PC/66.

II. OPTIONS FOR AGENDA 21

FOREST CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT - GLOBAL OBJECTIVE

6. There is an urgent need to put forests and forest resources within a more appropriate context with respect to the role they play in human welfare and the contributions they provide to realization of a better quality of life to mankind. Too often they have been perceived as a land or timber bank from which everybody can draw without further accounting. That time is now gone and the perception of their role is becoming clearer as well as the price that will be paid if what is left of them continue to be destroyed. One major global objective is therefore proposed for consideration:

"ACHIEVE CONSERVATION AND RATIONAL UTILIZATION OF ALL FORESTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

7. To achieve such a global objective a series of programmes should be put into place covering different aspects of forests conservation, development and rational utilization. Some of them will rely on reinforcing or redressing existing activities being carried by international, regional or national organizations. Others will need to be put into initial operation while selecting or establishing the most adequate institution or structure for their further development.

8. PROPOSED PROGRAMME AREAS

A. DEVELOPING AND INTENSIFYING FOREST INVENTORIES AND LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT FOR AFFORESTATION

B. DEVELOPING MECHANISMS FOR GLOBAL/REGIONAL/NATIONAL AFFORESTATION AND REFORESTATION INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR LARGE-SCALE GLOBAL FUNDING FOR FORESTS

C. ASSESSING POTENTIAL IMPACT ON FORESTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND INITIATING IN-DEPTH STUDIES ON THE CARBON CYCLE RELATING TO DIFFERENT FOREST TYPES

D. SUPPORTING EXISTING AND ENCOURAGING EXPANSION OF PROGRAMMES FOR PROTECTION OF SELECTED FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

E. ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING LARGE-SCALE PLANTING PROGRAMMES

F. ENCOURAGING REGIONAL/NATIONAL REHABILITATION OF DEGRADED LANDS

G. DEVELOPING AND ENCOURAGING EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FORESTRY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

H. ENCOURAGING INDUSTRY AND TRADE IN FOREST PRODUCTS BASED ON SUSTAINABLY MANAGED FOREST RESOURCES

I. DEVELOPING MORE TRAINING AND RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATING FACILITIES FOR RESEARCH RESULTS

J. DEVELOPING NATIONAL PROGRAMMES ON FOREST ACCOUNTING AND MECHANISMS FOR ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC VALUES OF FORESTS

A. DEVELOPING AND INTENSIFYING FOREST INVENTORIES AND LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT FOR AFFORESTATION

1. Basis for Action

(a) Regular inventories covering all forests are not readily available for the purpose of monitoring changes in global forest cover. Status updates from year to year of world forest cover and biomass volumes are crucial to combat deforestation, increase forest management quality, encourage better planning and afforestation programmes and provide a better picture of the relation between forests and global warming.

2. Objectives

(a) Provide planners, politicians and other decision-makers with accurate and sound resource information on the extent, quality and quantity of forests resources as soon as possible and on a regular basis.

(b) Strengthen existing or establish new mechanisms for the development of permanent forest resources monitoring and assessments.

3. Activities

(a) Increase the availability of remote sensing facilities for monitoring global forest cover and the technology for interpretation of satellite images, especially to developing countries at national and regional levels.

(b) Increase the availability, at national and international levels, of information based on regular land assessments for purposes of afforestation and forest management, to countries and national, regional and international planning and funding agencies.

(c) Encourage the extension of remote sensing inventory survey technology to ecosystem surveys in order to have early warning of possible ecological disaster and to take pre-emptive action.

(d) Develop assessments of financial and technological needs of developing countries to strengthen their ground survey capabilities. Based on such assessments take steps to strengthen developing countries' survey capabilities. Ground truth surveys will still be essential to adjust, complement or confirm remote sensing surveys.

(e) Establish an intergovernmental global forest monitoring panel which meets regularly to assess and coordinate all available inventory information. The work of the panel could be focused only on that essential task. The results of the work could be made available to countries and institutions, particularly funding institutions.

B. DEVELOPING MECHANISMS FOR GLOBAL/REGIONAL/NATIONAL AFFORESTATION AND REFORESTATION INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR LARGE-SCALE GLOBAL FUNDING FOR FORESTS

1. Basis for Action

(a) International funding for forest activities, particularly in the developing countries, is essential. Such funding needs would initially increase as these countries change over to sustainable management methods and expand their forest related activities. At present forest funding is mainly centred on intergovernmental organizations especially funding bodies of the United Nations. In addition there is increasing and significant funding inputs from bilateral institutions.

(b) The magnitude of funding needs will increase substantially in the future when afforestation targets have been determined based on survey information. Without adequate funding and coordination mechanisms, donor and loan organizations may find totals required extremely large. A global funding mechanism, with funding focused on the forests sector, could probably shoulder such a burden in the long term.

(c) Harmonization of afforestation and reforestation needs of countries, especially developing countries, as well as their other needs related to forest activities, would help facilitate coordinated solutions that integrate the developmental and conservation imperatives of forests. A global funding mechanism could help necessary harmonization.

2. Objectives

(a) Establish a global funding mechanism to provide funding for afforestation and reforestation projects and related forest action.

3. Activities

(a) Undertake feasibility study of the concept of a global funding mechanism, taking all relevant facets into account, including models of global afforestation needs, in collaboration and cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations, institutions, and individuals of standing in this field.

(b) Assess short and medium term funding needs for forest related activities, particularly, but not solely, in developing countries.

(c) Investigate innovative ways in which a global forest funding mechanism could be established and operated.

C. ASSESSING POTENTIAL IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON FORESTS AND INITIATING IN-DEPTH STUDIES ON THE CARBON CYCLE RELATING TO DIFFERENT FOREST TYPES

1. Basis for Action

(a) Forests play a crucial role in combating global warming, but there is still considerable uncertainty with regard to the information on the carbon

exchange between the different forests types and the atmosphere. Such information is necessary to assess the amount of afforestation or reforestation needed to combat a build-up of atmospheric carbon.

(b) Assessment of the potential impact on forests of climate change is necessary to determine how much, when and in what way a particular forest ecosystem could be affected by abrupt changes in precipitation and temperature patterns. This information is essential for the formulation of afforestation plans as it will affect the choice of species used and the silvicultural activities necessary.

2. Objectives

(a) Provide planners, foresters and scientists with adequate supporting and planning tools for the formulation of medium term and long term forest management and plantations plans.

(b) Establish a continuing process of research and in-depth studies on the assessment of potential impact on forests by climate change.

3. Activities

(a) Cooperate between international organizations and other institutions within and outside the United Nations family, which have the responsibilities to continuously monitor climate change and global warming, eg the International Negotiating Committee (INC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

(b) Develop research and evaluate alternate scenarios relating to the type of species and methodology necessary, as well as the suitable extent of afforestation, bearing in mind the economic, social and environmental aspects of such afforestation.

(c) Disseminate results of research and studies to forest organizations and funding organizations at all levels.

D. SUPPORTING EXISTING AND ENCOURAGING EXPANSION OF PROGRAMMES FOR PROTECTION OF SELECTED FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

1. Basis for Action

(a) Some programmes already exist to set aside selected forested ecosystems as protected areas, such as under the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention, the Western Hemisphere Convention. Support for the expansion of such activities will ensure the safeguarding of genetic materials and ecosystems, much of which may still be unknown, for future generations. (See also Biodiversity: Options for Agenda 21; Document A/CONF.151/PC/42/Add.4).

2. Objectives

(a) Maintain significant areas of forest ecosystems under protection as a basis for biological diversity conservation, research areas on forest ecology and protection of cultural heritage.

3. Activities

(a) Establish a system of forests under protected areas and encourage a network of representational repositories of forest genetic materials and ecosystems.

(b) Encourage the study, monitoring and listing of such protected areas and their genetic contents and ecosystems values.

(c) Create an international register of protected areas in cooperation and coordination with existing systems of registering such as by IUCN, and those under the above mentioned conventions.

(d) Reinforce action by international and national organizations for the establishment, management and monitoring of protected forest areas.

E. ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING LARGE-SCALE PLANTING PROGRAMMES

1. Basis for Action

(a) Afforestation, by means of plantations, is mainly but not entirely, the most practical way so far known to increase the plant biomass in the minimum of time. Natural expansion of the natural forests is limited by the long time-frame for such trees to re-colonize degraded areas and reach maturity. Plantations are also the only known means of tree regeneration capable of covering vast expanses and of rehabilitating extensive marginal and degraded lands. Increasing forest cover is not only beneficial in respect of climate change but also as increasing employment opportunities, production of wood and non-wood materials including energy and other services. The promotion of adequate multi-species afforestation and regreening of arid and semi-arid regions (e.g. Sahel) could be supported.

2. Objectives

(a) Recover the balance of global forest cover worldwide and by regions and nations while increasing the levels of goods, services produced and development opportunities to humankind.

(b) Based on sound assessments of the needs and possibilities, establish practical yearly increasing targets, to reach a gross area of plantations of over 12 million hectares by 2010, to be revised regularly in light of new ideas, information and technical developments.

3. Activities

(a) Ascertain land availability for afforestation.

(b) Develop environmental guidelines for their application to massive global plantation programmes.

(c) Establish adequate funding mechanisms and operational structures for these programmes.

(d) Strengthen national forestry institutions by special training for afforestation and further management, including full maintenance of tree crops.

(e) Encourage public and private sector's action in afforestation (from government to independent farmers and enterprises) through the mobilization of all sectors of society while ensuring local participation of youth, women, communities and indigenous people.

F. ENCOURAGING REGIONAL/NATIONAL REHABILITATION OF DEGRADED LANDS

1. Basis for Action

(a) Woodlands and marginally wooded areas occupy a substantial portion of the earth's land area. Left as they are, many of these areas can deteriorate into arid and semi-arid land, thus increasing the area of deserts. The re-greening of these areas will create livelihood for local communities, increase the carbon reservoir capacity of the existing forests, and help combat climate change while providing better opportunities to local inhabitants.

2. Objectives

(a) Contain the currently desertified areas and prevent further desertification.

3. Activities

(a) Launch forest rehabilitation plans on former woodlands, through agroforestry, rural community trees and forest plans and other equivalent systems.

(b) Expand and re-orient existing programmes such as the Tropical Forestry Action Programme, so as to accelerate action at the national and regional levels.

(c) Further expand and reinforce wildlife management and protection programmes including those related to migratory species conservation.

G. DEVELOPING AND ENCOURAGING EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FORESTRY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. Basis for Action

(a) In parallel with plantation efforts developed through official action, thousands of villagers in developing countries (as well as some developed countries) could be encouraged to plant trees for fuelwood, food and fodder and protection. Trees with commercial and utilitarian uses can be planted with consequent benefit on villagers as livelihood tree plantations or as additional income. Women and youth have contributed significantly to such efforts in the past. The role of trees and wooded plots in urban areas is increasingly appreciated for shade and other services which contribute to a better quality of life.

2. Objectives

(a) Improve the livelihood of villagers through the promotion and establishment of expanded wooded areas and plots in their communities.

3. Activities

(a) Promote and support expansion of social plantations, which could possibly be dovetailed into rural development and similar schemes.

(b) Develop and expand special training for foresters, extentionists, and planners in the area of small scale forestry.

H. ENCOURAGING INDUSTRY AND TRADE IN FOREST PRODUCTS BASED ON SUSTAINABLY MANAGED FOREST RESOURCES

1. Basis for Action

(a) The economic value of forests, principally as timber, has been, and still is, the most visible developmental aspect of forests. Wood is the most common forest raw material used today by industry. Others include rubber, resins and naval stores. Only a very small portion of forests in developing countries are sustainably managed. A substantial increase in the proportion of sustainably managed forest is required.

2. Objectives

(a) Assure that all timber and timber products used by industry or entering the national and international trade originate from sustainably managed forests by the year 2000.

3. Activities

(a) Intensify programmes for research, promotion and training in sustainable management of forests.

(b) Stimulate national and international financial and technical assistance to facilitate such programmes.

(c) Encourage and strengthen international organizations and institutions already promoting sustainable management practices, such as FAO, UNESCO, ITTO. Support the implementation of the ITTO Guidelines.

(d) Encourage dialogue in appropriate fora, as for example GATT, to mitigate trade restrictions on timber products of developing countries.

(e) Promote substantial expansion of local processing of wood products in developing countries.

(f) Promote removal of market barriers of manufactured and processed timber from developing countries.

I. DEVELOPING MORE TRAINING AND RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATING FACILITIES FOR RESEARCH RESULTS

1. Basis for Action

(a) An intensive and widespread campaign to facilitate change over to sustainable management practices in developing countries' forests is necessary. Forest research has received insufficient attention and support, particularly when compared with support given to the agricultural sector. Forest research needs to be expanded but also re-oriented towards the real needs and possibilities of developing countries in order to respond to them and to provide solutions which are compatible with the nations ecological and economic conditions. (See also Environmental Education. Documnt A/CONF.151/PC/55).

2. Objectives

(a) Provide forest managers, planners and researchers with know-how, methodologies and sound data for the sustainable management of forests and woodlands.

3. Activities

(a) Strengthen and encourage international organizations action towards the promotion and support for forest sustainable management.

(b) Encourage research institutions at national, regional and international levels, to increase research and training activities related to sustainable management of forests.

(c) Strengthen national forestry institutions, policies and programmes to help meet the target to attain sustainable management by year 2000.

J. DEVELOPING NATIONAL PROGRAMMES ON FOREST ACCOUNTING AND MECHANISMS FOR ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC VALUES OF FORESTS

1. Basis for Action

Even though forests are providing a wealth of goods and services to societies, most of these products are not accounted for in the national

accounting systems nor valued adequately within national or regional planning efforts. The general trend is still to consider the value of forests on the sole basis of the timber or some other marketable product without due consideration of the many other products. The lack of adequate perception of those values and practical methodologies to assess their values are the principal causes of the problem. Furthermore most developing countries have inadequate inventories of their forest resources and little control on the changes taking place. (See also Environmental Accounting. Document A/CONF.151/PC/49).

2. Objectives

(a) Provide planners, economists and decision makers at the national level with adequate tools for sustainable management of and decision making upon forest and forest land resources.

3. Activities

(a) Reinforce current action by international organizations and research centres towards the development of practical methodologies to assess the value of forests comprehensively.

(b) Promote the development of procedures by research centres and the further launching by national governmental institutions of systems for National Accounting of Forest Resources.